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ABSTRACT

The intersection between land grabs and climate change mitigation politics in Myanmar has created new political opportunities for scaling up, expanding and deepening struggles toward 'agrarian climate justice'. Building on the concepts of 'political opportunities' and 'rural democratization' to understand how rural politics is relevant to national regime changes in the process of deepening democracy, this paper argues that scaling up beyond the local level becomes necessary to counter the concentration of power at higher levels. At the same time, this vertical process is inextricable from building horizontal networks and rooting struggles in communities. By looking at national-level land policy advocacy for more just land laws, accountability politics in mining at a regional level in the southern Tanintharyi region, and the bottom-up establishment of local indigenous territories, this paper illustrates how expanding these struggles becomes necessary, but is also accompanied by potential fault-lines. These fault-lines include divergent political tendencies within the network and challenges to working in areas contested by the Burmese state and ethnic armed organizations.

Introduction

Political reactions 'from below' to what has been termed 'the global land grab' following the 2007/2008 financial crisis have been diverse, ranging from resistance to grabs and mobilizations across local, regional, national and transnational levels, to negotiations to improve compensation or for better terms of incorporation into land deals (Hall et al. 2015; Borras and Franco 2013). Attention has been given to the importance of 'convergence' across struggles, around common demands for system change, food sovereignty or climate justice as a strategy to strengthen demands against powerful actors (Tramel 2018; Mills 2018; Claeys and Delgado Pugley 2017). However, linking local and national struggles with transnational movements also brings accompanying tensions, as these have their own histories (Edelman and Borras 2016; Peluso, Afiff, and Rachman 2008). While studies have looked at different ways in which mobilizations have engaged with

the state, this contribution looks specifically at the context of a national regime transition in Myanmar, namely from authoritarian militarism to nominal democracy, and how agrarian resistance shapes and is shaped by these changes at national level.

Reforms in 2011/2012 in Myanmar under President Thein Sein intensified entry of capital into infrastructure, land and extractive industries, deepening liberalization policies that began in 1988 under the SLORC/SPDC governments. Open conflict still continues between the Burmese military and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) in some areas. In others, ceasefires have created a situation of 'neither war nor peace economy', building on earlier rounds of ceasefires in the 1990s, in which the Burmese military steered EAOs toward businesses, granting them concessions as part of a strategy of political neutralization (Kramer forthcoming). The term 'ceasefire capitalism', has similarly been used to describe the entry of foreign and domestic capital into infrastructure development, large-scale land concessions, mining licenses and forest demarcation in previous conflict areas (Woods 2011). National elites linked to the military are consolidating a new form of crony capitalism, building on the historic concentration of power in businesses and conglomerates in what has sometimes been considered an emerging oligarchy (Jones 2014; Ford, Gillan, and Thein 2016).

While these changes have created threats, they have also opened political opportunities for mobilizations 'from below', in the context of increased formal civil and political rights even as targeted repression through jailing and threatening of farmers and journalists still persists. New land laws, such as the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law (2012) and the Farmland Law (2012), facilitate the acquisition of land by powerful actors, but discussions around the National Land Use Policy (NLUP) have also created openings for actors 'from below' to influence policy-making and attempt to shift this balance of power (Franco and Ju 2016). Similarly, multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) have created new frameworks for investment that can threaten existing livelihoods, but have also allowed civil society actors to push for greater participation. 'Green grabs', interconnected with land grabs (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012; Borras and Franco 2020), have threatened the livelihoods of forest users but have prompted grassroots to mobilize around indigenous rights (CAT 2018, 2020; Morton 2017).

Prior to the recent political liberalization, there was a systematic weakness of social forces that could challenge the model of state-facilitated crony capitalism, such as labor organizations, the middle class or radical food-sovereignty or peasant movement (Jones 2014; Malseed 2008). However, recently there has been emerging ground level resistance by farmers through ploughing protests, collective judicial action against land grabs, regional CSOs helping farmers through networking and training, and other tactics such as letter writing, negotiations and protest (TNI 2015a; LIOH 2015). There have also been campaigns against large-scale dams and mining and palm oil concessions (ALARM et al. 2018; Tarkapaw et al. 2015; Suhardiman, Rutherford, and Bright 2017; Park 2019) and demands for the recognition of customary tenure systems in the ethnic borderland areas (CAT 2018, 2020; ECDF 2016). In this context, activists in Myanmar have found opportunities and challenges in strengthening local community-building while at the same time strengthening national-level mobilizing and advocacy. As this paper will argue, they are both necessary in the struggle toward 'agrarian climate justice' and in the wider process of deepening democracy. National-level advocacy can create 'openings'

for action and shape rules at the top, while community organizing is essential to include local people and communities in the broader political arena, while also serving as alternative forms of democratic governance. This paper shows the need to 'close the gaps'[1] in these vertical and horizontal dimensions of mobilizing struggles: between grassroots and political spaces dominated by elites, between organizations and communities to strengthen internal representation, accountability and legitimacy; and across rural groups through sharing of collective knowledge, resources and strategies.

The theoretical framework presented here builds on Borras and Franco's (2018) concept of 'agrarian climate justice' as a normative framework with principles and a direction for change. It connects this to the wider process of 'deepening democracy' and Fox's (1990) concept of 'rural democratization', which brings forward more specifically the relation between national regime changes and rural politics. Experiences in other countries show that shifts from authoritarian rule to electoral democracy do not automatically lead to greater economic and political inclusion of diverse rural poor. Further, the concept of 'political opportunity' from the political process tradition of social movement theory (Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) allows us to see how openings at national and other levels are perceived 'from below' and shape choices in movement actors' strategies. The paper seeks to understand under what conditions scaling up, outward and rooting struggles for agrarian climate justice become possible, through the horizontal component of building networks across organizations and a vertical component of creating relations with different areas of the state (Franco 2008).

This paper[2] builds on two assumptions. Firstly, following Borras and Franco (2018), that contemporary agrarian justice can only be achieved when embedded within climate justice, and climate justice can only be pursued and achieved when embedded in agrarian justice. The justification for this has been given regarding the intersection of climate change mitigation politics and land grabs and how they can exacerbate pre-existing exclusionary dynamics in rural areas and create new ones. Climate change politics can trigger or legitimize land grabbing directly or indirectly, such as through the rise in biofuel crop production. It can also delegitimize existing smallholder and indigenous practices that are serving de facto climate change mitigation purposes even as they are not officially recognized as such (Franco and Borras 2019; Borras, Franco, and Nam 2020). Industrial tree plantations labeled 'reforestation projects' can destroy local villagers' community forests or small-scale shifting cultivation practices vital to livelihoods when appropriated by powerful elite-linked companies with support from government concessions, in places where historically villagers have been marginalized such as in Cambodia (Scheidel and Work 2018). Climate change mitigation policies and economic land concessions often coexist in the same landscape, and facilitate each other physically, discursively and economically (Work and Thuon 2017). Gender and generational impacts can also be exacerbated when, for example, large palm oil concessions and forest conservation initiatives overlap in post-conflict areas (Park 2019). In Myanmar, conservation initiatives by big

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[1]Thank you to the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.
[2]This paper benefited from the wider MOSAIC research project which was based on a scholar-activist approach (Borras 2016; Hunsberger et al. 2017) including two region-wide workshops in Tanintharyi, in-depth interviews, personal conversations with CSOs and activists, participant observations of activities, meetings, trainings, and press conferences in multiple field visits between 2016 and 2018. Additional information gathered relies on secondary sources such as NGO reports, news and policy reports.

conservation organizations often intersect with state-making and territorialization practices that have historically been violent and exclusionary for rural and ethnic communities (Woods 2019), being implemented in landscapes that have been subject to waves of accumulation and extractivism by military cronies, with consequent dispossession (Barbesgaard 2019a).

For these and other reasons, the classic demands of agrarian justice and land reform by agrarian movements for a 'guaranteed minimum' amount of land for rural workers and small-holders to sustain their livelihoods, and a 'land size ceiling' that sets a maximum limit to prevent accumulation among elites and corporations (Franco and Borras 2019, 197), and 'climate justice', which considers that the emergence and resolution of the climate crisis requires addressing social justice concerns, must be pursued simultaneously (Franco and Borras 2019).[3]

Secondly, political opportunities for scaling upward, outward and deepening 'agrarian climate justice' struggles are accompanied by potential fault-lines, such as competing political tendencies within the network (Table 1), divergent approaches to engaging with the state, and divergent strategies and framings. The main argument is that localized struggles and advocacy at the national level are equally necessary, but in themselves insufficient in realizing 'agrarian climate justice'. Forces against agrarian climate justice can be stronger at national or international levels, but local activists can find powerful allies at these levels to advance their struggles. The paper highlights the process of 'closing the gaps' in scaling up, outward and deepening agrarian climate justice as also a process of deepening democracy.

The following section lays out the theoretical framework, outlining 'agrarian climate justice' as a normative concept, 'political opportunities' as shaping the arenas of action pushed 'from below', and a discussion on deepening democracy and more specifically 'rural democratization' in linking national regime changes with rural politics and how these relate with agrarian climate justice (ACJ). The subsequent section looks at specific struggles in Myanmar and in the southern Tanintharyi region, including national-level advocacy for just land laws, accountability politics in mining at regional level, and indigenous claims to territory at local level, to illustrate the scaling up of struggles and identifying accompanying potential fault-lines. The conclusion discusses broader implications of these struggles.

'Agrarian climate justice': alternative principles to mainstream development

In Myanmar, where the new wave of liberalization, built on an earlier wave in the 1990s, is based on a modernization narrative supported by international financing institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), focused on regional connectivity with Southeast Asia, export-oriented growth, infrastructure development, foreign investment, and an economic paradigm where 'There is no Alternative' (Bello 2018, 9), agrarian climate justice provides a normative counter-point that places social justice at the center, even as movements, activists and villagers are themselves defining 'from below' what an alternative to mainstream development looks like and how it is articulated.

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[3]See also Schlosberg and Collins (2014) on the evolving debates around climate justice.

As a normative, analytical concept, 'agrarian climate justice' (ACJ) emphasizes the inclusion in decision-making as equally important to distribution of resources, guided by the '5Rs': (i) *redistribution* – of wealth and power, especially land; (ii) *recognition* of marginalized, excluded and discriminated social groups such as indigenous people and ethnic minorities; (iii) *restitution* of access to land, territory, water and forests lost in resource grabs; (iv) *regeneration* of the environment in the context of ecological and climate crisis; and (v) *resistance* within or against capitalism[4] (Borras and Franco 2018). While it offers a potential mobilizing frame in Myanmar, it is less clear *how* to achieve them, who are the actors struggling for and against it, and what are the contexts in which these struggles are embedded. Therefore this paper embeds this discussion of ACJ in wider process of deepening democracy, or 'rural democratization', to understand the political dynamics of these struggles, in a particular moment of 'transition' from military rule to nominal democracy.

However, as this paper shows, while it agrees with the formulation that the 5Rs must be pursued simultaneously, the examples here show that recognition is rather a *pre-condition* to achieve the other R's in the process of deepening democracy. Meanwhile, resistance is necessary but one part of 'how to get there', and has limited reach without recognition, since going beyond case-based resistance, struggles toward longer-term visions of regeneration become necessary. This includes regenerating relations with nature, regenerating communities, regenerating trust between state and society, and considering generational dimensions of sustainability (see Park forthcoming). In fact regeneration flourishes in places of resistance and in the process of seeking recognition. What initially were 'expose and oppose' strategies later became 'propose' alternatives in forest areas. For mining environments, regeneration becomes a greater challenge where lands, forests and rivers have been temporarily disrupted or permanently destroyed. Restitution in a context of historical displacement and conflict such as in Myanmar is challenging and contested, while redistribution remains as a critical demand, maintaining the question of inequality at the center of struggles. However, without recognition these remain a challenge.[5]

Therefore, agrarian climate justice as an analytical lens considers the classical demands of agrarian justice, concerning redistribution of land, while also considering the ecological dimensions that are relevant and critical in the current global conjuncture, namely around ecological limits that are pushed in extractivist endeavors and deforestation by large-scale agribusiness concessions, such as palm oil and logging. However, this paper theoretically advances the idea that the 5Rs must be considered within a political context, not as separate from the historical and political conditions in which they are embedded and articulated. The 5Rs are also limited in understanding 'how to get there'. In order to emphasize the need to look at national regimes, and state–society relations in transition, this paper also builds on political opportunities, rural democratization and the deepening of democracy.

Political opportunities and threats for 'agrarian climate justice' struggles

The concept of 'political opportunity' can be useful to understand the scaling upward, outward and deepening of struggles for 'agrarian climate justice', as it places 'analytic

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[4]In the most recent version, Borras (2020) expands to '*in short, revolution*'.
[5]See also Fraser and Honneth (2003) for a debate on recognition and redistribution.

focus on the mutual influence of context and strategy', or the role of exogenous factors inhibiting or enhancing social movement mobilizing. These external factors may facilitate activists to advance claims, mobilize supporters, develop alliances, employ strategies and affect politics and policy (Meyer 2004, 125–126). For challengers, it is about the 'balance of opportunities-threats' which shapes action (Tarrow 1998). Opportunities can include '(1) opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) evidence of political realignment within the polity; (3) availability of influential allies; and (4) emerging splits within the elite' (Tarrow 2011, 164–165). The political process approach incorporated states and opportunity structures into earlier 'resource mobilization' theory, which saw socially connected groups or movement 'entrepreneurs' as key in mobilizing resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996).

Tilly (1978) saw changes in opportunities over time as influencing choices in 'repertoires of contention'. Tilly highlighted the relationship between frequency of protest and political openness. When authorities opened up meaningful avenues of access and influence, protest was reduced (Meyer 2004, 128). In seeking to explain social movement activity in 1965–1970s Italy, Tarrow (1989) similarly observed that 'government openings reduced the cost of collective action' while repression tended to diminish protest (Meyer 2004, 130).

There have been criticisms of political opportunity structures as a concept, for being too broad, for overemphasizing structure, neglecting cultural and discursive elements and overlooking how political opportunities are interpreted (Della Porta and Diani 1998; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Goodwin and Jasper 1999). These led McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) to incorporate discursive and interpretive aspects such as 'framing', and a more dynamic, relational and processual approach. As the examples later will show, framings often provide an opportunity for disparate groups to see themselves represented in a common – if strategically articulated – collective identity or goal. However, disparate framings can also pose challenges to building alliances that are inclusive of diverse identities. As Fraser (2007) has noted, *misframing* can also be consequential, by excluding some in favor of others, and be a serious injustice if excluding non-members. In Southeast Asia, rural collective mobilizations have often been framed not in class terms, but in terms of 'ethnicity, culture and attachment to place', with overlapping and sometimes conflicting narratives around indigeneity; ethno-territorial autonomy; citizenship and right to land and livelihood; and 'rural utopias' (Hall, Hirsch, and Li 2011, 171–172). For some authors, ethno-territorial and identity-based claims 'to some extent undermined, leftist-inspired land-to-the tiller campaigns for land reforms', such as in Indonesia (180). In Latin America, 'defense of territory', initially an ethnic claim by indigenous movements, was increasingly incorporated by peasant movements that had largely mobilized on the basis of class (Brent 2015; Alonso-Fradejas 2015). In contrast, in Bolivia, cultural recognition by the state facilitated a shift from 'resource-based claims to ethno-identitarian issues', leading to a conflict between native communities and peasant organizations (Fontana 2014). Notwithstanding the challenges, Edelman and Borras (2016) contend that it is more fruitful to investigate when, under what circumstances and how such class-based and other differences may serve as obstacles to more broad-based coalitions and movements.

Other critiques of political opportunity structures have been on the issue of relevance, as authors have proposed a more 'movement-relevant theory' that was useful to

movements and that considered research and analysis by movement participants (Bevington and Dixon 2005, 185). The cases in this paper attempt to incorporate activist observations, highlighting the challenges they have pointed out in their struggles, but also some of the tensions. Further, while political opportunity structures were later applied to transnational advocacy organizations working with human rights groups in the Global South (Keck and Sikkink 1998) and (trans)national agrarian movements and indigenous movements (Claeys and Delgado Pugley 2016), some have argued the framework may not adequately fit into non-consolidated democracies, where institutional arrangements between state and society are in the making (Houtzager 2001). As this paper will show, opportunities at the national level in Myanmar allowed for greater mobilizing toward agrarian climate justice, however the availability of political opportunities in itself is also not sufficient in achieving ACJ, requiring the active development of horizontal networks and strategies, building strength in numbers, and grounding or rooting these actions among communities.

Deepening democracy in rural areas through agrarian climate justice

ACJ struggles provide an opportunity for deepening democracy. In Myanmar, in order to achieve this, what is necessary is to 'close the gaps' between elite spaces and previously marginalized and under-represented groups through vertical linkages and strategies, building connections across disparate and sectoral resistances and organizations, and deepening connections between organizations and communities at the village level. Deepening democracy requires closing the gaps upward, sideways and downwards. According to Gaventa (2006), 'deepening democracy' 'focuses on the political project of developing and sustaining more substantive and empowered citizen participation in the democratic process than is often found in representative democracy alone', where 'democracy-building is an ongoing process of struggle and contestation rather than the adoption of a standard institutional design' (p. 3). Fung and Wright (2003, 3) see beyond competitive elections, which are increasingly ineffective as a form of political representation, toward

> accomplishing the central ideals of democratic politics: facilitating active political involvement of the citizenry, forging political consensus through dialogue, devising and implementing public policies that ground a productive economy and healthy society, and, in more radical egalitarian versions of the democratic ideal, assuring that all citizens benefit from the nation's wealth.

They also point to other principles, namely 'egalitarian social justice', 'popular control over collective decisions, community and solidarity', and while they emphasize Western ideals of 'individual liberty' (p. 4), they nonetheless highlight how a democratic politics beyond electoral politics is necessary. Fung and Wright (2003) and Gaventa's (2006) 'deepening democracy' allow us to see ACJ as embedded in this wider struggle in Myanmar.

Further, Fox's (1990) concept of 'rural democratization' connects national regime transitions more specifically to rural politics, where the consolidation of democracy depends 'on the rural poor's capacity to gain both power and legitimacy in national politics' (p. 12) through autonomous participation to influence state decisions by proposing action and demanding accountability (p. 8). It highlights the two-way process of building and

consolidating institutions such as peasant organizations, associations or political parties to represent the interests of the rural poor, and the state's establishment of formal and informal accountability mechanisms to attend to the demands of diverse rural people (p. 1).

However, it is important to note that transitions to democracy do not automatically lead to greater representation of rural interests. In Indonesia, for example, some argue that the transition to democracy after authoritarian rule under Suharto was *not* followed by a rupture from previous concentration of state power and clientelistic politics. Instead, the centralized patronage system continued in a more fragmented and decentered fashion (Aspinall 2013) and old elites coopted the new institutions of democracy (34: referring to Robison and Hadiz 2004). At local level in rural areas, village officials and elites had their power reinforced in the process of transfer of resources and power to local institutions, preventing local people from participating in democratic decision-making (Ito 2011, 415–416). Mass based peasant organizations emerged, but some argue they were fragmented and atomized due to challenges in forging national coalitions and fracturing at the grassroots (Bachriadi 2010). Corruption and patronage persisted among political elites to acquire power and strengthen coalitions (Van Klinken 2009; Slater 2004). However, others emphasize how the dispersal of political authority in fact opened up space for democratic consolidation (Liddle and Mujani 2007).

In the Philippines, the 'people power revolution' restored democratic rule in 1986, ousting Marcos' 20 year dictatorship. However, despite national elections, a patchwork of 'territorially uneven concentrations of authoritarian holds' remained at the subnational level (Franco 2001, 7, 2008). The democratic transition was followed by a persistence of political elites in rural areas, with local power holders gaining access to national arenas. Informal institutions of patronage politics prevented the deepening of democracy (Putzel 1999). Further, the patterns of class domination and land ownership persisted (Hawes 1987). However, the transition to democracy opened up political opportunities to push agendas 'from below', such as demands for land reform (Borras 2007, 106), and elite divisions at regional level created opportunities for citizen campaigns to include previously excluded groups in contesting authoritarian clientelism (Franco 2001, 20). Hence, formal transition to democracy at a national level does not automatically lead to the transfer of power to villagers, although it may create political opportunities that can be exploited 'from below'.

This paper follows Fox's (1990) 'rural democratization' and the process of deepening democracy in rural society. This paper emphasizes the need to scale upward, outward and downward, where strengthening the idea of 'scaling up' rural social organizations and networks is necessary to confront elite power through 'vertical' linkages between local levels and allies in regional and national levels, as well as a 'horizontal' dimension across villages, and deepening this relation with communities, even as there is an 'inherent tension between building organisations that have a national reach and impact, and at the same time building organisations that have local grounding and depth' (Franco 2008; Fox 1990).

Challenges and threats of fault-lines remain in the dynamic process of closing these gaps and deepening democracy in rural areas, namely divergent political tendencies within the network (Table 1). Further, the history of conflict creates tensions and mistrust with the state and poses challenges to mobilizing across ethnic identities and contested territories – even as these are attempts to deliberately and strategically overcome these by political actors.

Table 1. Competing political tendencies.

Tendency 1	Tendency 2	Tendency 3
Regulate to facilitate land deals Assumes that large tracts of marginal, empty lands are available for large-scale land deals for the corporate sector and states to address the food, energy, financial and climate crisis. Supports clear property rights, proper functioning of free markets, transparency of transactions and administrative and technical facilitation of capital accumulation.	**Regulate to mitigate negative impacts and maximize opportunities** Assumes large-scale land deals are inevitable, and redistributive rural development to promote small-scale farming is impossible. Often deploys international governance instruments to simultaneously strengthen property rights and protect land rights of people, environmental and labor standards. Corporate Social Responsibility-type solutions that include human rights, labor equity, community, development, environmental impact protection can sometimes serve this tendency.	**Regulate to stop and roll back** Assumes the current model of development based on capital accumulation and profit maximization through large-scale, fossil-fuel based, industrial, mono-crop plantations will not solve world hunger and the environmental crisis and excludes people from land and degrades the environment. Not limited by ideas of private property and includes customary tenure arrangements and seeks to 'expose and oppose', stop and rollback land grabbing, proposing alternative visions such as food sovereignty.

Source: Compiled by author based on Borras, Franco, and Wang (2012).

Competing political tendencies within the network

Borras, Franco, and Wang (2012) suggest three political tendencies of regulatory responses to land deals in the context of the global land rush, that are useful to understand one of the key tensions within movements (see Table 1). Rather than static ideological stances, political actors can create tactical or strategic alliances across these, or appropriate discourses of other tendencies to advance their goals. As Myanmar moves through a contested process of democratization, the challenge has been in identifying the allies across the spectrum.

Scaling upward and outward and rooting agrarian climate justice struggles in Myanmar

The following section illustrates a national-level land advocacy strategy toward more socially just policies, a regional-level mining monitoring network, and struggles for recognition of indigenous territories with emphasis on strengthening communities. It outlines how they contribute to 'agrarian climate justice' in a contested process of rural democratization, and potential fault-lines.

'Land is not commodity': reframing rules at the top

What does advocacy for just land policies imply for scaling-up of agrarian climate justice and rural democratization in Myanmar? Changes at the national level allowed for small openings that could be pushed by actors 'from below', widening the space for participation of other civil society actors. As Fox (1993) argues: '[c]onflicting embedded orientations and policy currents within state institutions create opportunities for different social actors to influence state action. These opportunities create "access routes" that influence the process of social mobilization in a reciprocal process of state-society interaction' (p. 6).

The Land in Our Hands (LIOH, or *Doe Myay* in Burmese) was founded in February 2014 as a national multi-ethnic network composed of more than 60 allied farmers, community based organizations, civil society organizations, and ethnic activists from fourteen states and regions (TNI, 2015a), and were key in the consultations for the National Land Use Policy 2014–2016, which saw unprecedented civil society participation. While the initial draft was revealed in October 2014, it was largely pro-business and with limited consultation (Franco and Ju 2016). The initial plan was to finalize the policy by December 2014 after internal government consultation at national and regional levels, but due to efforts by civil society organizations, notably LIOH and allies, the process was slowed down and made more inclusive, and a final version was announced in January 2016 (Oberndorf, Tein, and Oo 2017). Aside from altering the consultation process, important demands from CSOs were included in the NLUP, namely, the reference to customary and ethnic land rights (Suhardiman, Kenney-Lazar, and Meinzen-Dick 2019, 9). The process 'involved a total of 79 public consultations held between November 2014 and June 2015, including 17 government-led consultations and 62 Civil Society Organization-led consultations held in 43 townships' (Forbes 2016).

Political opportunities are also related to access to international allies and frameworks. The involvement of international donors, such as USAID, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the European Union (EU), through financial and technical assistance were part of the pressure to include amendments into the NLUP draft (Suhardiman, Kenney-Lazar, and Meinzen-Dick 2019, 7; Forbes 2017). The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) were used by participants linked to LIOH to evaluate the draft NLUP put forward by the government, to assess objectives, identify weaknesses and include contributions, legitimizing grassroots perspectives with reference to international standards, or what could be called 'policymaking from below' (Franco and Ju 2016, 64). International human rights, or rights-based international regulatory instruments such as Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), have also been used as standards (Faxon 2017; Park 2019; TNI 2015b). In national contexts where the struggle for rights is still underway, human rights can be useful to demand political participation and recognition (Franco 2008).

However, the spaces of policy and law-making are contested by powerful actors. Amendments to the final NLUP 'sparked resistance among conservative elements of the government, especially those connected to crony capitalists and the military', as they could threaten their power by giving back control of lands to local people (Suhardiman, Kenney-Lazar, and Meinzen-Dick 2019, 8).

> U Shwe Mann [from the military Union Solidarity and Development Party, USDP] resisted the entry of customary tenure in the NLUP. He runs a kind of law oversight committee, an ally of Aung San Suu Kyi, close to the military, [he] wrote a letter in 2016 to remove customary tenure from NLUP.[6]

Another activist[7] said, 'The government is actually full of retired military officers, a network of them. The military is linked everywhere, so change [may occur] in maybe

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[6]Personal conversation with land rights activist, 12/05/2018, Dawei.

20 years.' Therefore, policy continues to illustrate the balance of social forces in state and society. Tensions have continued under the NLD government, with long delays in establishing the National Land Use Council, which would implement the NLUP (Suhardiman, Kenney-Lazar, and Meinzen-Dick 2019, 10). Similarly the investigation commission,[8] established to investigate land grabbing and restitute grabbed lands, had limited results due to inconsistencies between data and actual land use and ownership, and 'conservative government officials personally involved in land grabbing are also part of the Reinvestigation Committee' (p. 11).

Some of the limitations were that 'land to tiller' (giving land to those ready to work it), a 'land size ceiling' and a 'guaranteed minimum land access to villagers' were omitted in the NLUP (Borras and Franco 2018). Further, the NLUP policy-making process lacked sufficient use of ethnic languages, and were mostly in Burmese and English, while female farmers were mostly represented by elite women (Faxon 2017).

Contesting the Farmland Law and the VFV Law

In another campaign, LIOH held a press conference on 23 May 2018 in Yangon. One day prior, representatives from 12 regions or states reviewed the press statement based on inputs from regional workshops attended by 493 land activist CSOs and 1,619 people.[9] Their final proposal was a demand to 'review, revise and repeal' the Vacant Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law of 2012 (VFV Law), The Farmland Law (2012) and the Draft Land Acquisition Bill (2017), largely seen as facilitating corporate and military land grabbing without recognizing customary forms of tenure. LIOH also proposed an alternative 'Federal State Law' that was inclusive of farmers, Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), and local ethnic and indigenous populations. A leading activist from a Karen organization said:

> Another umbrella land law should be developed. A Federal Land Law that can cover the whole of Myanmar. Not only few people would help design the law, but should be open to the whole country, especially farmers. If democratic reform process is to be successful, it has to be supported by the public.

In a panel discussion, criticisms of the government laws were presented. 'The 2017 Draft Acquisition Bill can help acquire land at any time legally. This law protects land grabbers,' said the LIOH representative from Tanintharyi. The secretary-general of LIOH added: 'They are all designed for land grabbing (…). The Farmland Law links to the VFV law and vice versa (…). They have to be abolished all together.'[10] While all members wore black T-shirts with the slogan 'Land is not commodity,' they took a bold stand in demanding the repealing of unjust land laws. Among the critiques were the centralization of power in the Ministry of Home Affairs through the 2017 Land Acquisition Bill, the facilitation of 'legal' land grabs by criminalizing villagers:

> I am being sued by this [VFV] law. Villages that have existed for more than 50 years, we are suddenly considered as squatters. [According to] The article 26-28, even if people are farming

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[7]23/05/2018, Yangon.
[8]The Parliamentary Land Investigation Commission (PLIC), re-established as the Central Reinvestigation Committee for Confiscated Farmlands and Other lands.
[9]LIOH Press statement
[10]Senior activist, male, LIOH, 23/05/2018, Yangon.

on this land, at national level they are considered VFV land. And people living on this land are considered criminals.[11]

The non-recognition of customary or collective tenure of indigenous people was also highlighted: 'For indigenous people, land is life and inheritance from our ancestors. Through different governments they have never recognized our customary practices. There is no VFV land in ethnic areas.'[12]

> Customary practices are core of life of indigenous people. They are our lifeline (…) We conserve it and pass onto next generations. The laws by the central government never include the protection of them. As indigenous person myself, I also practice customary practices.

The challenge of tenure security for IDPs was also highlighted, particularly in conflict-ridden Kachin state, in the north of the country. '[E]ven if the people find safety in refugee camps, their land is taken by companies. In Kachin, land security is in great danger because of the war,' said the Kachin representative for LIOH, illustrating the challenge of restitution in areas affected by conflict. Demands for participation in the policy-making and decision-making process were also brought to light: 'There are 70% farmers in the country, but they are never included in the drafting of these laws. So we are asking real farmers to be included in the process,' added the Mon state representative of LIOH, illustrating demands for access and control of resources but also for recognition and the right to be part of the political community.

What does advocacy around land laws illustrate? It suggests that 'big and bold' strategies can be effective and necessary to gain traction at a national level, and that in order to counter powerful actors at these levels, equally strong national-level organizations may be necessary. Broader framings such as human rights can be useful to include diverse rural groups interests, including ethnic minorities and IDPs, across different sectors. However, there are potential fault-lines. Political tendencies within the network can create tensions and divergent directions. While LIOH and allies had a pro-social justice agenda closer to Tendency 3 (see Table 1) that recognized plurality and multiple dimensions of land (TNI 2015a), cleavages developed with actors working closer to Tendency 2.[13] Relations with the state also diverged: while the Land Core Group (LCG) committed to proximity with the state and working closely with the government, LIOH continued with a critical independent stance through advocacy. As Mark (2017) observed in the Delta area, LIOH took an approach that was 'disruptive' but also negotiated at times, while LCG tended to focus on capacity-building training.

Accountability politics in mining: negotiating state–society relations in the middle

Although liberalization of the extractivist sector created new threats to livelihoods in rural areas, it also created opportunities for mobilization. The EITI process paved the way for 'transparency and accountability' multi-stakeholder groups at the national level, as well as at a regional level, which could be exploited by actors 'from below' to push for

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[11]LIOH Press statement.
[12]Representative of Karen State of LIOH, 23/05/2018, Yangon.
[13]Personal conversation with key member of LIOH network, 06/06/18, Dawei.

greater accountability.[14] However, potential fault lines include cleavages between social justice seeking actors due to ethnic politics, and challenges due to divergences in political tendencies, as some approaches approximate Tendency 2. Meanwhile, in some areas, there is limited community-building and strengthening accountability of members and leaders.

Mining of tin and tungsten in Tanintharyi has been practiced since British colonial times. Mines became state-owned in the 1970s under Burma's state socialism as state-owned Mining Enterprises. After liberalization in the 1990s under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta, reforms facilitated private investments, often by military-linked cronies, such as in Kanbauk and Heinda mines, and exploitation intensified (Leehey 2019; DPLN, n.d.; Gardiner et al. 2015). The mines in northern Tanintharyi had previously been open access to small-scale miners, with extracted materials reaching the Thai border through trade routes guarded by the Karen National Union (KNU). However, the military campaign to cut access of the KNU to financial sources and illegal trade led to the privatization and reworking of rules of access to mining, which in some areas occurred at the same time as enclosure of lands (Barbes-gaard 2019b, 158–159). Small-scale mining largely co-existed with these larger scale practices, and small-scale miners would sell to local 'collectors' or companies, often complementing their livelihood with other sources. However, through the process of privatization, some practices became more difficult and recently criminalized. According to local NGO staff, it is believed that most small-scale mining output is sold to Thailand, China and Malaysia. Many areas in Tanintharyi have suffered from incursions by the Burmese military during the years of conflict and remain contested by the KNU and other armed groups despite the signing of ceasefire agreements in 2012.

The location of mines, the authority under which they operate and the proximity of companies to the state or the KNU influence CSO/NGO strategies when demanding accountability for or opposing those mines. Mining of tin, tungsten and coal have been linked to negative environmental and social impacts, such as land confiscations, exclusion of small-scale miners, river contamination, noise and air pollution, with cumulative impacts on health, agriculture, water and food security. Complaints about poor working conditions have also arisen within mining sites. Diverse reactions 'from below' have been documented by the news, as affected people seek accountability, compensation or suspension of operations (see Leehey 2019).

The Boabin mining case is illustrative of some of these issues. During the author's visits to one of the mining-related events, on 7 June 2018, approximately 150 villagers gathered at the monastery of Boabin, a mining area recently experiencing tremors due to the use of underground explosives in the extraction process. The villagers requested to have a dialogue with the government and the company. Government representatives did not attend, while three company representatives[15] were present, as well as people from nearby mining villages and supportive NGO members.[16] 'We are very afraid. We hear underground explosions every day. The houses are shaking. There are seams and

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[14]The term 'accountability politics' comes from Fox (2008).
[15]Two representatives from Dawei-Myeik Company and one representative from Myanmar Mining Enterprise 2.
[16]From Dawei Probono Lawyer Network (DPLN), Earthrights International (ERI) and Dawei Development Association (DDA).

cracks on the walls (because of this). If there are any accidents, how will you deal [with it]?' asked one villager. Two representatives of the citizen-led Mining Monitoring Group (MMG)[17] mediated the event. Representatives of Dawei-Myeik Company denied any wrongdoing or negative environmental impacts. The villagers and NGOs primarily requested the company's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP). 'Do you have EIA and EMP?', demanded a female representative of the citizen mining monitoring group. 'Have you discussed your EMP plan with the villagers?', demanded another representative of the group. As the monk of the village entered the room, the company representatives sitting at the table moved to the floor. NGO members[18] stood up to clarify EMP and EIA procedures to the company – to which eventually the latter had no answer. The monk was visibly angry: 'Initially, I stand with the mining company for years. But now, we are all in danger.' As the company tried to deviate blame, the monk demanded: 'Stop the operation. Do investigation. Come up with a solution. Then re-start the operations!' The company official attempted to disqualify the complaints by saying the village was illegal and was located within the mining concessions. The dialogue resonates with what one NGO lawyer had said during an interview about the change in dynamics when villagers start to use legal language to contest power, similar to O'Brien's (1996) 'rightful resistance'.[19] Many of these villagers' livelihoods were linked to mining through selling labor to the company, so it was visible they were not entirely against the presence of the mining company, but were keen on improving the terms of their incorporation and achieving greater transparency and accountability.

The campaign around the Boabin mine was part of a wider citizen-led monitoring network that has been 'scaling up' in Tanintharyi, initiated as a collaboration between the NGOs DDA and Dawei Probono Lawyer Network (DPLN), with technical assistance from Earthrights International (ERI), involving community training on legal rights as well as strategic litigation.[20] While the effectiveness of the monitoring group was still being tested – with mixed results among citizen groups working in each mine – plans were to expand from Dawei district to the southern districts of Myeik and Kawthoung. The connection to the national-level CSO network Myanmar Transparency Alliance (MATA), according to NGO members, provided legitimacy with the central government.[21] However, the continuity of the monitoring group was subject to decisions by the regional government, with uncertainty on the continuity of activities after the upcoming elections.

In another mining case involving the Banchaung coal mine, located in a KNU-controlled area, the mining monitoring group was no longer operating. According to an interviewee, the location was too far and difficult to reach with resources and staff, and there were some challenges in operating within KNU-controlled areas. CSOs had somewhat abandoned EIA/MATA-related frameworks there, and although continuing with some trainings on regulatory frameworks for young people, it was a greater challenge for

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[17]This mechanism was created by DPLN and DDA, with support of ERI and the regional MONREC minister to monitor responsible practices of mining enterprises in the region.
[18]DDA and ERI.
[19]Photos and videos were also shared on social media via mobile phones
[20]Interview with DPLN. 12/12/2017. Dawei. The Heinda and Boabin mines were strategic litigation cases, also taken to the Myanmar Human Rights Commission. While the Heinda case was accepted at the Dawei District Court, the Supreme Court dismissed the lawsuit.
[21]Personal communication with two junior NGO office-based staff, Dawei, 14/05/2018, Dawei

older people to feel engaged. The emphasis in these areas, therefore, was greater on indigenous peoples' rights and Free, Pior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and with NGO support (Tarkapaw Youth Group & Ban Chaung Community Sustainable Environmental Conservation Committee 2018). Nonetheless, attending regional MATA meetings was useful for obtaining information and sharing with other Karen organizations.[22] Other CSOs working at the national-level also expressed challenges in working in KNU controlled areas, considering the remoteness of forest areas as well as language challenges, as villagers mostly speak Karen.[23] The monitoring group considered establishing a group in Lenya forest, mostly inhabited by Karen communities, to investigate an unlicensed mine, not licensed by the central government or the KNU.[24] Another female staff from a Karen NGO based in Dawei and familiar with Banchaung mentioned, during a workshop in Myeik, that KNU had recently recognized community forests in the Banchaung area,[25] providing registration under the KNU government. Nonetheless, Banchaung was also part of an advocacy campaign that involved the Thai Human Rights Commission to demand accountability for Thai investments.

In the two mining cases it is possible to see some convergence across actors that collaborate through information sharing, creating common platforms, advocacy, legal training, and strategic litigation, despite the challenges of working in contested territories. Strategic litigation can create awareness about a case, set a precedent or serve as potential deterrent, establish norms for companies, and help communities and CSOs be seen as legitimate negotiating partners, where changing the political culture is a key outcome. Political actors seeking social justice sometimes adopt legal strategies, but this must be combined with 'politico-legal' mobilization, meaning a 'rights-advocacy' outreach network that will support poor and marginalized claimants (Franco 2008). Empowering communities through trainings lessens the concentration of capacity among NGOs.

However, the dilemma of 'spreading wide' by expanding the web of organizations to increase bargaining power at regional and national levels, or focusing on community-building, can create tensions. While some NGOs focus on 'accountability and transparency' and 'responsible investment', others propose framing around indigenous rights, autonomy and environmental stewardship, although these also require recognition from state and non-state armed groups. Restitution of confiscated lands and polluted rivers therefore still remains a challenge while political actors seek recognition in judicial spaces and in national or regional advocacy politics. Some organizations decided to focus on policy advocacy at the national level, while building on resistance against individual companies or the government. 'We cannot do everything,' mentioned one organization leading the Mining Monitoring Group.[26] However, some mentioned the challenges of 'rooting' struggles. 'It is not useful to focus on community-building – we need to take action, know what is happening at regional and national levels',[27] said a leading activist,

[22]Interview with female staff of a Karen NGO based in Dawei, familiar with Banchaung, 10/06/18, Myeik.
[23]Female senior staff of a national-level NGO, interview, 07/05/18, Yangon.
[24]Senior Karen NGO activist, Tanintharyi, personal communication 18/06/2018, Myeik.
[25]Female staff of a Karen NGO based in Dawei, familiar with Banchaung, interview 10/06/18, Myeik.
[26]Junior NGO office staff, male, personal communication, 03/12/2017, Dawei.
[27]Leading NGO activist, male, personal communication, 10/11/17, Dawei.

referring to critical changes happening around frameworks at the national level, and the importance of contesting elite power at those levels.

Agrarian climate justice as territory: articulating indigeneity from the ground up

On May 2020, the Conservation Alliance of Tanawthari (CAT), a coalition of Karen organizations working for indigenous rights in the southern Tanintharyi region, launched a report critiquing mainstream, 'top-down' environmental conservation.[28] Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, speakers at the online press conference stated, '[b]y looking at the COVID-19 affecting everyone, the rich, the poor, the indigenous communities and those who live in city we can understand that our economic system easily can be hurt and broke', said a senior Karen activist,[29] arguing that the world needed new conservation policies and a new economic system. In territories conserved by indigenous people, preserving nature and biodiversity were even more relevant amidst the global environmental and climate crisis.

Ceasefires and economic liberalization in Myanmar have increased threats to small-scale farmers and resource-users. The newly arriving climate change mitigation initiatives, interacting with land grabs, build on old forms of military state territorialization in areas contested by non-state armed groups (Borras and Franco 2020; Park 2019; Woods 2019). NGO activists highlighted how conservation efforts were threatening the peace process.

> When we look at the R2R [Ridge to Reef conservation project], we can see that it is threatening the NCA [National Ceasefire Agreement] process. (…) [W]hen we are talking about stopping ceasefire, we also worry about (…) how long this is going to last,

said another senior Karen NGO leader at the launch. However, the ceasefires have also allowed for activism where it was not previously possible, for example one of the Karen organizations in Dawei began activities in 2012 and formally founded the organization in 2014, with the establishment of the fish sanctuary in an area now composed of 12 villages, tentatively set to seek recognition as indigenous territory.[30] The political opening in the country had allowed local organizations to mobilize around international frameworks such as Indigenous Community Conserved Areas (ICCA), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), even creating their own FPIC rules (CAT 2020).

Although primarily a response to top-down conservation, struggles for indigenous territories occur in response to multiple threats, including mining, palm oil, large-scale infrastructure development and dams: 'Kamoethway is challenged by, not only mega-development project, but also with the conservation project. Especially TNRP, which got funding from the oil company and also supported by the Myanmar government,' said a senior Karen NGO activist for indigenous rights.[31] Mobilization in remote villages

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[28]The Tanintharyi Nature Reserve, a protected area occupying 420,000 acres, and two additional proposed protected areas: the Lenya National Park and the Tanintharyi National Park, covers over 1.3 million acres. Plans to connect these through a Tanintharyi Nature Corridor would occupy a total of 2.5 million acres, constituting almost a quarter of all land in Tanintharyi region.
[29]Senior Karen NGO activist, male, 22/05/2020.
[30]Interview Senior Karen NGO activist for indigenous rights, male, 05/11/2017, Dawei.
[31]Interview Senior Karen NGO activist for indigenous rights, male, 05/11/2017, Dawei.

further south in Myeik, have also occurred in response to a large palm oil concession (MAC) and conservation threats in Lenya forest (ALARM et al. 2018; Park 2019), all of which overlap with historic displacement and conflict. In reality, scaling-up has occurred as a progression over time, with case-based advocacy combined with other campaigns toward a more horizontal strategy of networking, alliance and coalition-building.

However, there are challenges for organizing struggles in forest areas, where distance, access via rivers, and dispersed communities pose logistical challenges for NGOs reaching out to these remote villages, despite increased access to telecommunication in recent years. Research in Karen state suggests that people who have experienced direct Tatmadaw violence, including displacement and extraction of food, supplies and labor may more strongly identify with and support KNU ethno-nationalism, suggesting engagement in mobilizations may depend on historical experiences with the state and the KNU (Campbell 2014, 252).

Contested areas pose a challenge to scaling up, and seeking recognition of indigenous territories involves dynamic processes in negotiating relations with the state and EAOs. 'Even though the indigenous people are conserving the forest, watershed conservation, and fish conservation in their own traditional way, it is not acknowledged by the [Burmese] government. They said that the way you conserve this forest is illegal,' said one of the senior Karen activists active in Tanintharyi. '[T]he indigenous people say that we got registration from KNU to do forest conservation but from the government side said that KNU is an illegal organization.'[32] In Kamoethway, '[w]e are trying to have it recognized by the government', a leading activist said.[33] Another leading activist active in Karen state explained that they work closely with KNU administrative departments at district and national levels, and are often asked to support them, even though they don't work with the NayPiDaw government.[34] He explained that KNU had its own Forest Policy, through which communities developed their own rules and regulations regarding forest governance. While shifting cultivation was allowed, its expansion could be limited. By establishing a strong committee, and submitting a yearly management plan, they could manage their land, without external interference. There is 'full right of management to the community', he explained, and this was quite strong. 'We are registering individual land, but the idea is to have a customary land territory – and these would include one or more villages. (…) [Villagers] can only sell land to within the community.'

There are demands 'from below' to recognize ICCAs in laws and by-laws but from the Burmese government, 'until now, there is no law that will protect the indigenous people,' said another senior Karen activist.[35] However, this process is creating networks, platforms, avenues of access to the central state and non-state armed organizations, important for

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[32]Senior Karen NGO activist, male, CAT report launch, 2020.
[33]Senior activist on indigenous rights, field-based, Karen, male, Multi-sectoral Workshop Tanintharyi, 24/11/2018, Dawei. Kamoethway is composed of 11 villages and, according to local governance practices, includes nine different classifications of forest, for household forest use, domestic use, orchards, watershed, agribusiness and symmetry area (see RKIPN & TripNet 2016).
[34]Leading Karen NGO activist, male, personal communication 23/05/18, Yangon.
[35]Senior Karen activist active in Karen state, CAT report launch May 2020.

defending interests of indigenous people vis-a-vis elite and powerful interests, and which resonates with Fox's (1990, 8) concept of rural democratization or the capacity of the rural poor 'to gain both power and legitimacy in national politics', toward autonomous participation and 'propositional action'.

Therefore, community building and advocacy at the national level are both necessary to scaling up struggles and are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are inextricable, and without a strong base, movements become vulnerable to external threats.[36] 'It is also a process of building trust. Our aim is that when these communities do policy advocacy at a national level they can speak for themselves,' explained an activist regarding work done to strengthen community involvement.[37] One of the senior activists based in Dawei explained how their organization working for indigenous rights worked closely with field-based organizations to contest unfair compensation, such as that related to a company (ITD) linked to a mega-development project. 'If community is strong, we mobilize – if not, we don't,' said another activist.[38] The activist in Dawei[39] explained that in working with communities, they first start with activities such as fish research or community mobilization before starting an organization, where recognizing community members as knowledgeable people was important to build confidence. 'And our activity has a long-term vision (…) because in order to resist the mega-development project, community must be empowered (…). Without people confident in themselves, they never empower.' '[W]e cannot focus just only on compensation. We have to show alternative.' This shows the progression between resistance against projects, and the need for recognition and regeneration, even as resistance is a critical step in seeking the other Rs. Young people were also an important component (see Park, forthcoming). 'Without preparing young people, I don't think that our resistance may be long lasting. This is our strategy.' Karen organizations were also conducting youth camps in villages located in forest areas, such as one visited by the author in a previously conflict affected area now threatened by top-down conservation initiatives, and where a watershed inauguration ceremony was being held by the community,[40] illustrating the generational importance of 'regeneration' of communities and environments.

Local struggles have the potential to deepen democracy by pushing for recognition of those historically excluded from the national agenda. However, challenges remain in building stronger alliances with other sector mobilizations, across ethnic lines and diverse rural people, with a continued challenge of restituting land for returning refugees and internally displaced people. While it remains to be seen whether collective articulations of indigeneity will resonate with diverse rural people in the lowlands or on the coastlines, they represent an important possibility of regeneration. It is still uncertain how tactical alliances with conservation organizations (Tendency 2) can play out regarding unforeseen agendas. The recognition as ICCA requires support from international organizations, even though grassroots organizations have mixed relationship with them and

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[36]Thank you to anonymous reviewer for suggesting the emphasis.
[37]Leading Karen NGO activist based in Karen state, male, 23/05/2018, Yangon.
[38]Senior Karen NGO activist, male, informal conversation, 09/12/2017, Myeik.
[39]05/11/2017, Dawei.
[40]04/05/2018, village in Lenya Forest, Myeik.

dynamically negotiate alliances. Nonetheless, solidarity across Karen organizations has contributed to their strength and bargaining power.

Conclusions: some implications for how to think about struggles

The above illustrates the need for 'closing the gaps'[41] in the process of struggling for agrarian climate justice, showing that deepening democracy requires closing the gaps between grassroots resistances at village level and emerging community organizations and NGOs, linking, exchanging and building collective knowledge and trust across these and sharing resources for mobilization. Further, it requires the challenge of sustaining struggles over time. 'Scaling-up' to influence national level changes and finding opportunities to negotiate and seek recognition is only one component of the struggle for agrarian climate justice, and requires deepening to grassroot levels.

Land rights advocacy networks in Myanmar are pushing political opportunities at national level, through recognition and representation in these political spaces, for laws and policies that foresee redistribution and restitution of land and resources. In mining, advocacy citizen groups are shifting from resistance to engagement in village-level monitoring, connecting to regional-level networks through accountability politics. They are also seeking recognition in judicial arenas and multi-stakeholder platforms for restitution of confiscated lands and degraded rivers. In post-conflict areas, groups are articulating their demands for indigenous rights, seeking recognition of communal forms of tenure and claims to territory. Simultaneously, they are strengthening village-level governance of resources to regenerate communities and forests, building networks and coalitions horizontally across ethnic groups in different regions, and seeking recognition from state and non-state entities. Hence, recognition becomes a pre-condition to the other components of redistribution and restitution in agrarian climate justice.

At the same time, there are continued challenges in the process of scaling upward, outward and downward, particularly in mobilizing across wide distances and geographical areas, sustaining solidarity across different interests groups, namely across political tendencies, and different positions in relation to the state and non-state armed groups.

The implications for struggles in other countries as well as for transnational agrarian and environmental movements are that understanding agrarian climate justice requires embedding these in political contexts, considering the national regimes in place, with attention to critical moments or shifts in which opportunities may open up for action. Further, in contexts where historic conflicts have shaped state–society relations and trust across groups, particularly along ethnic lines, movements have to deliberately overcome the tendency to deepen ethnic divides and build cross-ethnic solidarities. Lastly, as this paper has shown, recognition is a pre-condition to redistribution, but the order and urgency for the 5R's to be pursued may be defined by the political opportunities that become available.

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[41]Thank you to the anonymous reviewer for suggesting this.

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